

Remarks on Preparedness Efforts for Hurricane Sandy
October 28, 2012

The President. Well, good afternoon, everybody. Obviously, all of us across the country are concerned about the potential impact of Hurricane Sandy. This is a serious and big storm. And my first message is to all people across the Eastern Seaboard, Mid-Atlantic, going north, that you need to take this very seriously and follow the instructions of your State and local officials, because they are going to be providing you with the best advice in terms of how to deal with this storm over the coming days.

We've just had an excellent meeting with the FEMA team here, the various agencies that are in charge, including the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, and others that are going to need to respond very quickly.

Under Craig Fugate's leadership here at FEMA, we've had a chance to talk to the regional officials as well. And I just had a phone call with the Governors of the potentially impacted States as well as some of the major cities in the region.

At this stage, everybody is confident that the staging process, the prepositioning of resources, commodities, equipment that are going to be needed to respond to this storm are in place. But as Craig has emphasized, this hasn't hit landfall yet, so we don't yet know where it's going to hit, where we're going to see the biggest impacts. And that's exactly why it's so important for us to respond big and respond fast as local information starts coming in.

I want to thank all the members of the team for the outstanding work that they're doing. But the other thing that makes this storm unique is we anticipate that it is going to be slow moving. That means that it may take a long time not only to clear, but also to get, for example, the power companies back in to clear trees and to put things back in place so that folks can start moving back home.

So my main message to everybody involved is that we have to take this seriously. The Federal Government is working effectively with the State and local governments. It's going to be very important that populations in all the impacted States take this seriously, listen to your State and local elected officials.

My message to the Governors, as well as to the mayors, is anything they need, we will be there. And we're going to cut through redtape. We're not going to get bogged down with a lot of rules. We want to make sure that we are anticipating and leaning forward into making sure that we've got the best possible response to what is going to be a big and messy system.

So again, thank you, everybody. Craig, would you like add to something?

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate. Now, again, as the President says, it's going to really come down to the public heeding those evacuation orders, taking protective measures. If they haven't gotten ready, they can go to ready.gov, get information on how to protect them and their families, but also check on your neighbors. This is going to be a big storm. We need to be there for each other.

The President. Okay. That—let me emphasize that again—ready.gov—for the general public. If you need to know how to respond, that's where you can get centralized information.

But I think Craig's point is exactly right. In times like this, one of the things that Americans do is we pull together and we help out one another. And so there may be elderly populations in your area. Check on your neighbor, check on your friend. Make sure that they are prepared. If we do, then we're going to get through this storm just fine. But we're going to have to make sure that we are vigilant and vigilant for a couple of days. Don't anticipate that just because the immediate storm has passed that we're not going to have some potential problems in a lot of these communities going forward through the week.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:55 p.m. at the headquarters of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

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